Executive Summary: There are 93 sites across Missouri participating in the Quality Assurance Report (QAR) pilot between 2019-2022. These sites are improving in quality and report satisfaction with the quality improvement supports they are receiving from the Office of Childhood.

Introduction

Research has shown that the quality of experiences that children have with adults and their peers, both in the home and in care and education settings, can significantly improve their outcomes in school and life.[1,2]

To achieve its vision that all children are safe, healthy, and successful learners, the Office of Childhood (OOC) is committed to ensuring that children receive high-quality care, education, and services, across the continuum of early childhood programs offered across the state, and that families have the information they need to make informed decisions about early childhood options for their children.

Definition of Quality

The OOC has developed the following draft definition of quality that it will seek feedback on from stakeholder groups in the fall of 2022.

Children and families, regardless of setting or funding source, receive care, education, and/or services in safe and culturally sensitive environments in which qualified and well trained early childhood professionals:

- Build genuine relationships and engage with them in an emotionally supportive manner
- Support child learning and development through engaging language and interactions as well as culturally and developmentally appropriate activities
- Tailor their support, as appropriate, to best meet the needs of children and families
- Connect families to other programs and services as appropriate

Background

The OOC is continuing to work towards quality improvement in the state by taking steps to define and measure the quality of its programs. In 2016, the state took steps towards quality measurement and improvement for early care and education programs through the establishment of a Quality Assurance Report (QAR) pilot. This pilot was created to develop a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process for early learning programs and to provide families with information about the quality of these programs.

To date, six cohorts of early childhood providers have participated in the QAR pilot, and data illustrates that participation has led to an improvement in the quality of the sites over time.

Cohorts 1-5 of the QAR pilot are assessed using environmental rating tools (ITERS, ECERS), with one for Center-Based Programs and one for Family Child Care programs. These tools measure indicators such as program structure, family engagement, learning environment, and staff qualifications.

Based on research that indicates high-quality adult-child interactions are highly predictive of child outcomes,[3,4] in Cohort 6, OOC is piloting the use of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®), which focuses on emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support, with a subgroup of participants also piloting the Program Administration Scale (PAS).

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[1] https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/144-the-research-case-for-home-visiting

[2] https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.103.6.2052

[3] LENA. "QRIS and interaction: Do quality rating systems reflect individual experience?" (2022)

[4] Sabol, T., et al. "Can Rating Pre-K Programs Predict Child's Learning?" (2013)

OOC is currently in the process of compiling and analyzing data from pilots to select and refine a quality framework and improvement system. While a specific tool has not been selected to scale at this time, the OOC will look towards national best practices on early childhood quality assessment and improvement systems, many of which are centered around teacher-child interactions, which are highly predictive of child outcomes.

Pilot Data

	Cohorts 1-5	Cohort 6
Number of participating sites	43	50
Number of participating classrooms	189	250
Quality assessment tool	Environmental Rating Scales (ITERS, ECERS, FCCERS)	Group A: CLASS+PAS Group B: CLASS

Pilot data illustrates that participation in QAR has led to quality improvements in child care sites across Missouri.

Supports Offered
- Between May 2019 and June 2022, programs participating in Cohorts 1-5 received 2,156 technical assistance visits. These visits require at least three hours of classroom observation, conferencing time with teacher/director, and reports shared with teachers, director, and OOC.
- Cohort 6 estimates 5,400 coaching sessions to be offered to both directors and teachers across the 50 sites participating by December 2023. 41 of these sessions have been offered as of July 2022.

Provider Satisfaction
- In 2022, teachers in Cohort 1-5 rated the quality of support received from their coaches a 3.48 (4 point scale) and administrators rated the quality of support 3.37 (4 point scale).
- Cohort 6 estimates 5,400 coaching evaluation reports to be collected from participants by December 2023 to evaluate the effectiveness of the support they receive from their coaches.

Improvements in Quality
- 88% of sites in Cohorts 1-5 improved their quality after receiving the quality supports associated with QAR between May 2019 and June 2022.
- On average, sites in Cohorts 1-5 improved their quality by 11% as measured by the environmental rating scale.
- 120 out of 242 (or 50%) initial CLASS observations for Cohort 6 have been completed as of July 2022 and a baseline of current quality is being established. Quality improvement data is not yet available for Cohort 6, but preliminary data is available in the Appendix.

Vision for Quality in Missouri
In considering its long term vision for quality in Missouri, OOC is committed to supporting all interested providers in improving the quality of their early care and education offerings. To do this, OOC plans to expand the QAR pilot so that as many interested providers may participate as possible.

As the pilot grows, OOC aims for the QAR pilot to:
- Provide clear, actionable information for communities and early childhood providers on how to improve site and classroom quality.
- Provide meaningful, relevant information to families and other community stakeholders about how well a classroom will support children's growth and development.
- Elevate the highest performing early childhood sites as models of excellence, and identify struggling sites for additional support.

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Plan for Achieving Quality Vision

OOC recognizes that achieving this vision for quality will involve shifts at all levels of the system and that this change cannot, nor should not, happen immediately. Scaling the QAR pilot will be a multi-year process, centered on stakeholder feedback and iteration of continuous improvement in the processes and procedures used in the pilot.

Proposed QAR Pilot Timeline

Summer 2022	Continue pilots for Cohorts 1-6
2022-2023	Expand the QAR pilot to additional providers and select and refine a tool and quality framework
2023-2024	Allow providers statewide the opportunity to participate in the QAR and associated quality improvement supports
2024-2025	Implementation of QAR occurs statewide with additional supports for participation

Conclusion

All findings from the pilot to date indicate that the QAR is creating positive change for programs. Participation in the pilot is leading to improvement in site quality, as indicated both by assessments and provider feedback. OOC eagerly anticipates additional data from the Cohort 6 pilot, which will be used to inform the selection of a tool to measure quality.

Appendix

Environmental Rating Scale Data

Programs in Cohorts 1-5 received learning environment quality assessments using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ERS). The scales are comprised of The Infant/Toddlers Environmental Rating Scale 3rd edition (ITERS-3), The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale 3rd edition (ECERS-3) and the Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS). Sites are evaluated on a scale from 0-7.

These findings illustrate that supports associated with QAR led to an increase in quality in all types of sites.

Type of Site	Baseline Score	After Supports
Average across all sites	**3.16**	**3.95**
School Districts	**4.30**	**5.05**
Missouri Accreditation Program	**4.51**	**5.02**
College Campus Programs	**4.29**	**5.01**
Large Private Child Care	**3.34**	**4.06**
National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Program	**3.40**	**3.98**
Church Affiliated	**3.42**	**3.81**
Small Private Child Care	**2.58**	**3.75**

Baseline CLASS Data

Data from approximately half of Cohort 6 sites has been collected as of July 2022. Because this cohort is just beginning their pilot, only baseline data is available.

Missouri programs participating in this project scored slightly higher using the CLASS than programs in other national evaluations. This may be attributed to the fact that these sites sought out pilot participation and are committed to improving their quality. The highest possible CLASS score is 7.00.

CLASS Instrument	Average Score	National Average
CLASS Infant (n=27)		
Responsive Caregiving	4.57	-
Relational Climate	5.23	5.04
Teacher Sensitivity	5.07	4.75

Facilitated Exploration	4.10	3.68
Early Language Support	3.88	3.31
CLASS Toddler (n=42)		
Emotional and Behavioral Support	5.32	-
Positive Climate	5.35	5.03
Negative Climate[1]	6.76	5.30
Teacher Sensitivity	5.08	4.33
Regard for Child Perspectives	4.60	4.36
Behavior Guidance	4.81	4.07
Engaged Support for Learning	3.31	-
Facilitation of Learning and Development	3.58	3.43
Quality of Feedback	3.01	-
Language Modeling	3.33	2.22
CLASS Pre-K (n=51)		
Emotional Support	5.68	-
Positive Climate	5.73	5.21
Negative Climate[1]	6.89	6.37
Teacher Sensitivity	5.37	4.34

Regard for Student Perspective	4.72	4.36
Classroom Organization	4.98	-
Behavior Management	5.43	4.94
Productivity	5.12	5.41
Instructional Learning Formats	4.38	4.57
Instructional Support	2.69	-
Concept Development	2.21	2.69
Quality of Feedback	2.95	2.87
Language Modeling	2.91	2.85

[1] **Scores for these dimensions are reverse-coded for this item and have been adjusted to match the 1-7 scale.**